

Fabian Tract No. 178.

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# THE WAR; WOMEN; AND UNEMPLOYMENT

- I.—UNEMPLOYMENT.  
II.—WOMEN AND INDUSTRY.

By the Women's Group Executive.

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# THE WAR ; WOMEN ; AND UNEMPLOYMENT.

MANY social problems have presented themselves to us in a fresh light and in changed relations in consequence of the experience brought by war. One of these problems is that of woman's economic position in this country.

Two aspects of that position are discussed in the two separate parts of this Tract. The first is the immediately practical question of the present wide-spread distress among women workers owing to lack of employment. The second is the helplessness of woman in face of the now pressing economic needs of the nation, owing to her lack of training and want of experience in business and organization.

## PART I.—UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG WOMEN WAGE-EARNERS, AND HOW TO DEAL WITH IT.

We are only now slowly coming to realize that "unemployment" in industry affects women as well as men, and often differently from men. How often do we not still find the state of the labor market treated as if it were solely a matter of the relative supply of and demand for *men*? If not many men are out of work, Government officials, Ministers of the Crown, and newspaper writers take it for granted that all is well. The Board of Trade Monthly Index Number (based on the unemployed members of certain trade unions), and the statistical return of unemployed among the trades coming within Part II. of the Insurance Act, are quite commonly accepted as fairly measuring the amount of distress from unemployment. Yet the three million persons covered by these two returns include scarcely any women. There is no Index Number with regard to women's unemployment. Hardly any statistics are published about it, or, when published, they are hardly ever given anything like the same prominence as those relating to men. The result of all this is that the great and terrible

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### ERRATA.

re 3 : for "5,854,036" read "4,830,734," and for "six millions" read "five millions."

re 4 : for "six millions" read "five millions," and for "at least seven millions" read "over six millions."

re 5, note : for "7,000,000" read "6,000,000."

re 7 : for "seven millions" read "six millions," and for "thirteen millions" read "fourteen millions."

re 20 : for "seven millions" read "six millions," and for "three millions" read "two millions."

re 22 : for "seven millions" read "six millions."

distress suffered by women wage-earners thrown out of work, whether owing to ordinary trade depression or to dislocation of war, and the consequent suffering to those whom these women wage-earners are helping to support, are very largely overlooked.

It is, perhaps, partly in consequence of this lack of statistical information about unemployment among women that the measures taken to prevent, or mitigate, or relieve unemployment nearly always result in benefit to men. Thus, when it is thought advisable to prevent unemployment by increasing the amount of work put in hand by town councils and other local authorities, it is always in men's trades that the additional volume of employment is created—the town council expedites some work of building, or drainage, or paving, or painting and decorating in order to take on men at wages. When distress becomes acute, the "relief works" started by the Local Distress Committee, such as road-making, or digging, or tree planting, are nearly always for unemployed men.

What is often forgotten, too, is that statistics with regard to the industries in which men are employed may give quite a wrong impression as to the state of employment in those trades in which women are engaged. Thus, during the months of September and October, 1914, when only a relatively small percentage of men were registered as unemployed, largely owing to the enormous number taken into Government pay or employed on municipal works, the percentage of women thrown out of work and standing idle without wages *was at least three times as great*. Yet the small percentage of men registered as unemployed was constantly being cited during that period as evidence that things were going on quite well, and that no exceptional measures were required. If as large a percentage of men had been registering as unemployed as there were women thrown out of work much more energetic steps would have been taken.

In the following pages we shall seek to prove the need for definite and distinct consideration, both by Government and the local authorities, not forgetting local relief committees of all sorts, of the needs of the women wage-earners who are unemployed, and to explain what ought to be done to help them, together with the part which might and should be taken in this matter by women themselves.

### Who are the Women Wage-earners.

Few people realize to what an enormous number the women wage-earners have grown in the United Kingdom. Never before have we had such a host. From the 1911 census we learn that no fewer than 5,854,036 females of ten years and upwards were engaged "in gainful occupations" in England and Wales alone. This total of close upon *six millions of working women and girls* excludes all those wholly engaged in unpaid domestic work at home. About 80,000 out of the total are working employers; about 313,000 more are "individual producers" working on their own account; the remainder, comprising the vast majority, are serving for salaries or wages. It is high time that we realized that industrial wage-earning is not an exceptional thing for women. More than half the entire



female population of these islands between the ages of 15 and 25 is thus at work for hire. In fact, the great majority of British women are wage-earners during some part of their lives; at the most employed age 70 per cent. are employed.

Here are the "gainful occupations" at which the bulk of approximately six millions in England and Wales were working in 1911:—\*

Net totals in industries or services.	Domestic service (indoors)	...	...	1,260,673
	Cotton manufacture	...	...	372,834
	Dressmaking	...	...	333,129
	Teaching (all branches)	...	...	211,183
	Local Government (including Police and and Poor Law Services	...	...	176,450
	Wool and Worsted manufacture	...	...	127,637
	Tailoring	...	...	127,527
	Drapery	...	...	110,055
	Inn or hotel service	...	...	110,506
	Agriculture	...	...	94,841
	Printing, bookbinding and stationery	...	...	87,609
	Grocery	...	...	58,935
	Boot and shoe making	...	...	45,086
	National Government	...	...	34,089
Totals in Occupation Tables.	Medical and nursing	...	...	87,699
	Art, music, drama...	...	...	49,998
	Laundry	...	...	167,052
	Metal trades	...	...	101,050
	Charwomen	...	...	126,061

If the female workers of Scotland (593,210) and of Ireland (430,092) be added to those of England and Wales, the total reaches 6,877,338. By 1915 the number of women and girls working for gain in the United Kingdom must have risen to at least seven millions.

It may be worth while to add a statistical estimate—the most accurate that can be framed until the Board of Trade deigns to give as much attention to women as to men—of what such of these women earn as belong to the manual working wage-earning class, omitting the professionals, such as doctors, artists, teachers, journalists, managers, clerks, and municipal or national Government officials, and to compare their earnings with those of men of the manual working wage-earning class. The estimate includes the value of board and lodging, when supplied, and of all extras, but deducts an estimated percentage for unemployment, holidays, and short time.

Table prepared for the Fabian Women's Group by Mr. Sidney Webb showing estimated earnings of Employed Manual Working Wage-Earners in the United Kingdom in the year 1912:

\* Valuable summary tables of the occupations of women in England and Wales, prepared by Miss Wyatt Papworth and Miss Dorothy Zimmern, are published by the Women's Industrial Council. Price 6d.

## MALES.

Class.	Numbers.	Average earnings in full week, including emoluments.		Average Wages Bill for a full week.	Yearly Wages Bill.*
		s.	d.	Million £.	Million £.
Men in situations :					
Below 15s. ...	320,000= 4%	13	0	0.12	10
15s. to 20s. ...	640,000= 8%	18	0	0.58	27
20s. „ 25s. ...	1,600,000=20%	22	6	1.80	85
25s. „ 30s. ...	1,680,000=21%	27	6	2.31	109
30s. „ 35s. ...	1,680,000=21%	32	6	2.73	128
35s. „ 40s. ...	1,040,000=13%	37	6	1.95	92
40s. „ 45s. ...	560,000= 7%	42	6	1.20	56.5
Over 45s. ...	480,000= 6%	50	0	1.20	56.5
Men in situations	8,000,000=100%	30	0	12.00	564
Casuals ...	700,000	12	0	0.42	18.5
Adult males ...	8,700,000	28	4	12.42	582.5
Boys ...	1,900,000	10	0	0.95	44
All males	10,600,000	25	3	13.38	626.5

Average earnings per adult employed manual working man throughout the year  $\frac{582.5}{8.7}$  £66.95, or £1 5s. 9d. per week.

\* Allowing five weeks for short time, sickness, involuntary holidays and unemployment.

## FEMALES.

Class.	Numbers.	Average earnings in a full week.		Average weekly Wages Bill for a full week in £100,000.	Yearly Wages Bill (net, as above).
		s.	d.		£.
Women in situations :					
Below 12s. ...	1,000,000	9	0	450	21,150,000
12s. to 15s. ...	1,500,000	13	0	975	45,825,000
Over 15s. ...	500,000	17	0	425	19,975,000
Women in Situations ...					
Casuals ...	3,000,000	12	4	1,850	86,950,000
Adult women ...	100,000	3	6	17½	822,500
Girls ...	3,100,000	11	7	1,867½	87,772,500
All females	1,500,000	7	6	565	26,550,000
Total Wages Bill	4,600,000	10	7	2,432½	114,322,500
	...	...	...	...	£740,875,500

Average earnings per adult employed manual working woman throughout the year  $\frac{87.772}{3.1}$  £28.31, or 10s. 10½d. per week.

NOTE.—The difference between 4,600,000 (the estimated number of female manual working wage-earners in 1912) and 7,000,000 (the estimated number of women and girls gainfully occupied in 1915) is to be accounted for partly by the increase in numbers between 1912 and 1915, but mainly by (a) the women employers; (b) the women working on their own account in industrial occupations; (c) the women and girls gainfully occupied but non-manual working wage-earners, such as doctors, artists, teachers, journalists, managers, clerks, local and national government employees. Domestic servants are included as manual working wage earners.

The estimate allows for an average of five weeks' wages lost in a year through short time, sickness, involuntary holidays, and unemployment. This "ordinary" amount of unemployment, though it makes a big hole in a woman's scanty wages, is not that about which we are now concerned. What is serious is the continued inability to get another situation, prolonged perhaps for many weeks; the weary search for a vacancy that takes the very heart out of a woman; the drain on the scanty savings so difficult to accumulate, which brings her face to face with the worst that fate can have in store for her.

### **How to Prevent Unemployment.**

The first thing to be done, when prolonged and widespread unemployment is imminent or apprehended, is to seek to prevent it. In this case prevention is ever so much better than cure. If private employers are beginning to turn off their "hands," it is the duty of public employers—that is to say, the Government Departments and the various local authorities—to do all that they can to increase their own staffs. When there is a falling off in the amount of employment in the way of trade, whatever work or service useful to the community can be undertaken by the public authorities ought then to be deliberately undertaken. Labor should be engaged at the standard rates of wages in the ordinary way, with the object of maintaining undiminished, as far as possible, the total volume of wage-earning employment. Nor need we be too careful that the augmentation of public employment is exactly in those particular crafts or specialized occupations in which a diminution of private employment is likely to occur. Coincidence in this respect, in so far as it is practicable, greatly facilitates matters, and it is not suggested that discharged clerks or jewellers can become navvies or cooks; but in the ever-changing tides of the vast labor market, the broadening of any channel has an effect in carrying off some of the flood, and of thereby relieving the pressure elsewhere. Any increase in demand for labor, by lessening the number of possible competitors, helps indirectly every kind of labor that is seeking employment.

This policy of actually preventing unemployment by augmenting public employment, in order to counterbalance the diminution of private employment—a policy quite distinct from that of letting people fall into unemployment and then providing "relief works" on which to set them to work just because they are unemployed and in distress—is now what is advised by the political economists. It has been definitely adopted as the policy of the State. In the Development and Road Board Act, 1909, it was expressly laid down by Parliament that, in creating employment under that Act, the Commissioners were to "have regard to the state of the labor market"; the implication being that they were to do little when trade was good, and as much as possible when trade was bad.

In August, 1914, when so much unemployment was caused by the war, we saw the various Government Departments (such as the



Office of Works in particular) under the direct instructions of the Cabinet, frankly recognizing the public responsibility for preventing as much unemployment as possible, and racking their brains to discover what work they could put in hand. Finally, we had the Local Government Board quite explicitly enjoining this policy on the local authorities as a general principle.

"Obviously the best way to provide for persons thrown out of their usual employment as a result of the war is to provide them with some other work for wages. . . . Where the demands of the normal labor market are inadequate, the committee should consult the local authorities as to the possibility of expediting schemes of public utility, which might otherwise not be put in hand at the present moment. Whatever work is undertaken by local authorities . . . should be performed in the ordinary way. . . . The men engaged . . . should, of course, be paid wages in the ordinary way."—(Circular P.R.D. 7, August 20th, 1914.)

Note the words "the men"! Unemployment among seven millions of gainfully occupied women and girls needs to be prevented just as much as unemployment among the thirteen millions of gainfully occupied men and boys, and no doubt the Local Government Board meant their advice to be taken as regards both sexes equally; but, unfortunately, those in charge of our Government Departments and those who run our town councils are almost exclusively men. When they put in hand schemes for increasing the volume of public employment, what is thought of is, practically always, employment for men. This, of course, comes easiest to them; and, moreover, few unemployed women wage-earners have even a municipal vote.

Women should see to it that, when unemployment is threatened, or has actually occurred, this policy of augmenting the volume of public employment is applied in the case of women, as it is in the case of men. The local authorities ought everywhere to be pressed to increase their staffs of women and girls, as some partial set-off to the new employment that they seek to provide for men. As there were no fewer than 176,450 women and girls in the Local Government service in England and Wales alone in 1911, the addition of only five per cent. (or one for every twenty already employed) would mean that nearly 9,000 unemployed women would be taken off the labor market. What town councillors are apt to do, if they are not reminded of women's needs in this respect, is rather to leave accidental vacancies unfilled among their women teachers or clerks, so that the staff falls off by five per cent. or more, and unemployment is actually increased.

We ought to urge on the borough and urban councils—also upon the county councils—that, in times of trade depression, they should take special care that their staffs of women and girls (teachers, typists, clerks, inspectors, health visitors, nurses, asylum attendants, charwomen, school cleaners, lavatory attendants, etc.) are kept at full strength, and, wherever occasion arises, promptly increased. We should press for the fullest possible number of learners or probationers to be taken on in every department, so that an increased number of women might be trained for higher work; that, for instance, all possible opportunities should be taken to increase the



numbers of scholarships for girls, girl student-teachers, and female teachers in training; that additional training colleges and hostels should be established; that the number of probationer-nurses in the public health hospitals and workhouse infirmaries should be augmented; we should insist that the elementary school staffs of women teachers should be increased—at any rate to the extent of all the trained teachers available, even taking on at once the whole year's supply leaving college in July—so as to effect the very desirable reform of reducing the size of the classes, wherever accommodation permits; we should demand that the opportunity be taken to introduce, among the council's staff, women sanitary inspectors and women health visitors; or to increase their number if already instituted, up to the limit of the local requirements.

We might very well press the local police authority (in London, the Home Secretary; in the City of London, the Corporation; in counties, the Standing Joint Committee; in boroughs, the Watch Committee) to appoint the police matrons who are so urgently required at all police stations. Why should they not appoint, too, some women as police constables, in order that they may be employed in various directions where they are more suitable than men? In the United States no fewer than twenty-five cities have now one or more "policewomen," Chicago having twenty, whilst Baltimore, Seattle and Los Angeles have five each, Pittsburgh four, and San Francisco and St. Paul each three. Canada, too, is beginning to utilize its women as police assistants, Vancouver setting the example in this direction. In at least thirty-five towns in Germany women police assistants have been appointed; in Mainz, Munich, Dresden, and ten other towns, they are appointed by the State and municipal authorities. Women police have also been appointed in Austria, Denmark, Holland, Norway, Switzerland and Sweden. Even in England, in order to meet the conditions arising from the war, women are now serving on the patrols organized by the National Society of Women Workers, and as voluntary policewomen organized by the Women's Freedom League, but they are not appointed on oath, and, therefore, have no power of arrest; moreover, the work is of a voluntary character. The police patrol work has already been abundantly justified, and should be extended in many directions. Police and military authorities alike are welcoming, and in some cases asking for, this co-operation on the part of women. If women can do the work, why withhold either the official status or the pay? The latest published report of the Commissioner of Metropolitan Police, for 1913, reveals the fact that London, at all events, employs one paid woman police officer, whose business it is to take the depositions of women and children in certain cases. By this time it may be hoped that there are more than one. In Southampton two women police constables were appointed in January, 1915.

Again, the local education authority might well take this opportunity to keep back from the overstocked labor market as many as possible of the girls about to leave school at thirteen or fourteen, and secure to them a year or two more educational training, wherever

possible of a technical character. To enable such girls to abstain from wage-earning, it would be necessary to provide them with maintenance whilst under training. This it is within the legal powers of the local education authority to do by awarding them maintenance scholarships, carrying not only full education but also a payment of the necessary few shillings a week. The number of such scholarships for girls compares very unfavorably with that for boys.

The idea might be carried further. It would be distinctly advantageous if the local education authority would, at times when women are exceptionally unemployed, offer maintenance scholarships pretty freely to selected girls of sixteen or eighteen, who are willing to put themselves under training, either for any skilled craft at which they could eventually get employment, or for sick nursing, for which there is a rapidly growing permanent demand; or, indeed, for any of the higher openings for women. A patriotic education committee might be moved to agree to such a proposal by offering special scholarships to the daughters of "men at the front," or of killed or wounded.

The present provision of technical education for girls by local authorities is extremely inadequate. In London, since 1904, trade schools have been established for limited numbers of girls, including, at present, schools for dressmaking, ladies' tailoring, millinery, upholstery, trade embroidery, corset and lingerie making, waistcoat making, cookery, domestic service, laundry work and photography; but outside London trade schools for girls hardly exist. At Manchester and Plymouth schools for dressmaking have been established, though in the former city there is provision for only twenty-four students; Reading has a school for domestic economy, the Birmingham education authority has lately opened a school for the training of girls as children's nurses, and the Brighton education authority has just decided to start a school for laundry work. This exhausts the list.

Trade schools apart, in the recent general development of technical instruction under the auspices of the Board of Education and local education authorities, whether by means of evening classes or of "vocational training" in secondary schools, there has been a strong tendency to confine the instruction of girls, other than intending teachers, to housecraft and needlework, or else preparation for clerical work, or, in evening classes, dressmaking.

Now is the time to provide more schools and more classes teaching new trades and promoting efficiency in trades already followed, which will make women competent wage-earners in the future. To this end it will be essential to provide a large number of scholarships with maintenance grants for girls, which grants would help to educate parents in the idea that immediate employment of a boy or girl on leaving school is detrimental to his or her future welfare, and that the school age must be raised so as to secure an adequate and thorough training in some trade or profession. Why should there not be opportunities for women to enter certain skilled and lucrative trades in which at present provision is made only for men? Further, it is necessary to convince parents and local authorities

that an educational training would be valuable in avocations not heretofore supposed to require it. A shop assistant, for example, would find her work more interesting, be more efficient, and be able to command better pay if she had a sound knowledge of the nature and provenance of the goods she sells.

Again, the local health committees should certainly see to it that the maternity centre and baby clinic, which every town needs, is at once started and developed. In this connection the sanction given by the Local Government Board for the training and employment, at fourpence per hour, either from relief funds or otherwise, of a staff of "mothers' helps" or "sick room helps" to visit the homes of women who are sick or being confined, in order to keep their households going, should certainly be utilized.

Local insurance committees should lose no opportunity to press for a beginning of the scheme for the home nursing of the sick, for which Parliament voted the money in the summer of 1914. The Insurance Commissioners do not want to take action on this decision of Parliament, and they are pleading for delay on grounds of economy and shortage of nurses. But unless a start is made with the training of probationers there will never be enough nurses. The sick need the nursing as much now (and are costing the approved societies as much through lack of nursing) as they did when the House of Commons passed the vote. The Government should be pressed on this matter.

Furthermore, local authorities should find and directly provide work at wages for unemployed women, analogous to the new buildings or the additional furniture by which these authorities can relieve the labour market as regards men. We ought to see to it that local authorities do not postpone any orders for uniforms, asylum clothing, or other garments; they should rather take the opportunity to increase stocks. They can sometimes properly take on a few women in the sewing rooms of the asylums or other institutions. Many women clerks and secretaries who are unemployed might be given work in public libraries. In February, 1913, 59 women were employed in the public libraries of eight metropolitan boroughs, and 314 in those of provincial towns, including 114 in Manchester. The women assistants who are thus employed are of various grades, and the salaries are from £1 a week, rising to 25s., and from £80, rising to £130. The work is particularly suited to women, and if more women were members of public library committees, it is reasonable to believe that the appointment of women librarians would be more frequent. It may not be generally known that women can be co-opted as additional members of such committees.

The local education authority might equip all the children at school with gymnasium and swimming costumes, and see to it that none went without warm socks or stockings and strong boots. But much more might be done. An immense improvement in the health and educational progress of the children in the elementary schools might be effected if local education authorities would start a



"school uniform" for boys and girls respectively; that is to say, suitable underclothing, together with a tasteful and hygienic dress of simple pattern, not necessarily identical in cut or color, but analogous to that adopted in some of the best boarding schools for the children of the wealthy. This would necessitate a free gift of the new clothing, at any rate in the poorest schools or to any parents requiring it. But it would be the means of getting rid of the insanitary layers of dirty wool and of the "rags and tatters" to which so many of the children are now condemned. What a splendid use might thus be made of a time of unemployment to put the whole school population, even the whole of the children in any particular town or village, into clean and healthy and beautiful clothing!

It may be needful to induce local authorities and other large consumers ordering supplies of clothing as above suggested to give their orders to other firms than those which formerly monopolized the supply, since such firms are in some cases exceptionally pressed by orders from the War Office and our allies, e.g., firms supplying the clothing and boots required for soldiers are working day and night. The Government stated last November that they have spread their orders for khaki amongst two hundred firms, apart from local contracts.

### **Why We Cannot Set the Unemployed Women to Commercially Productive Work.**

It is frequently urged that the Government, or the local authorities or relief committees, should open workrooms for unemployed women, and set them to produce any of the ordinary commodities for sale in the market. Thus, at the outbreak of the war in August, 1914, various philanthropic ladies started workrooms in which they employed women at wages *to make garments for sale*. Sometimes they importuned the War Office for contracts for shirts which would otherwise have been given to the usual contractors. Sometimes they begged their friends to give them orders instead of buying at the shops. Sometimes they sold the product to the wholesale dealers, who would otherwise have given out the work among their usual sub-contractors and home workers. Thus, the work done in these philanthropic workrooms was only *diverted from the ordinary channels of trade*. Absolutely no good was done to women as a whole. During that very month shirtmakers and tailoresses and dressmakers were being discharged all over the kingdom, or being put on "half time," because the orders which would ordinarily have been given in the usual course of trade were being greatly reduced.

A similar mistaken policy used to be pursued as regards women by the Central Unemployed Body for London, the authority for creating employment under the Unemployed Workmen Act, 1905. For unemployed men this body quite rightly avoided competition with employment in the ordinary course of trade, and put the men to work at useful tasks not yielding any commercial value and not sold in the market. For unemployed women, however, owing to some economic blundering at the Local Government Board which



has never been explained, the Central Unemployed Body conducted between 1908 and 1914 sewing rooms for unemployed women, where garments were deliberately made for sale in the market, where the utmost possible output was insisted on at the lowest possible cost, and where the enterprise was ostensibly run on commercial lines. The result can only have been to throw other women out of work. Moreover, the workrooms naturally failed even to make the profits they aimed at, and incurred considerable loss.

All such action is, from the standpoint of doing something for the unemployed, a clumsy error, which ought not to be repeated, whether by local authorities, by relief committees, or by benevolent people. To engage women in productive work of ordinary commercial character, which is merely substituted for other production, does nothing more than put some women into work at the cost of throwing others out of work. The total demand for labor is not increased. The Local Government Board now recognizes the mistake it made between 1908 and 1914, and the new women's workrooms of the Central Unemployed Body were, in October, 1914, ordered to be run on quite different lines from the old ones.

### New Trades for Women.

It may be asked, why should not the women take up new trades, in which they might produce for sale, and make their employment commercially self-supporting, without throwing other persons, or at any rate not other women in the United Kingdom, out of work? There is every reason why this should be done, *if and wherever it is possible*. But experience shows that there are great difficulties in the way. It needs no little ingenuity to discover any new manufacture or service that is both practicable and profitable. It is not easy to obtain the services of someone possessing the necessary managerial skill and the business knowledge that is required. It is often difficult to overcome the inertia and resistance of the ordinary wholesale trader or shopkeeper through whom the product has to be sold. The railway rates are found to make both the bringing of the raw material and the selling of the finished product very costly. Lastly, the women workers themselves require to be trained to the new occupation.

Such experiments are difficult, but there is every reason why they should be tried.

The pulping of fruit, with a view to its preservation and bottling or canning in jelly form, was started in September, 1914, at Studley Horticultural College, under the Board of Agriculture, by the aid of a grant from the Development Commissioners. The plant cost about £750, and the necessary working capital for the purchase of fruit, etc., amounted to £500. The women were engaged at regular wages by the aid of a grant from the National Relief Fund. No information is yet available as to the commercial results.

The bottling of fruit may be practicable in some districts where fruit would otherwise be wasted. This can sometimes be set up in a

small way by zealous volunteers, and made to cover the wages given to the workers. But it is practicable only for a short period in especial localities, and cannot be regarded as a trade. The drying of vegetables for sale in a form in which they can be preserved was also started in Warwickshire in September, 1914. This cost £800 for plant and £300 for working capital. Dried vegetables have hitherto been supplied from the Continent. They are used for export and for the supply of the troops, as well as for ordinary consumption.

The revival of the ancient home industry of hand-knitting is to be commended, in so far as it supplies the market with goods of better quality, for which there is a genuine permanent demand, or goods not otherwise obtainable, such as the special sea-boot stockings knitted by "trawler" women.

Foreign branches of trade in fancy leather, stationery, and metal ware may, with great advantage, in future employ women in England.

The exodus of foreigners from the country should give considerable scope for English women in cookery, as waitresses, and in several of the higher branches of the catering trade if the embargo of sex be withdrawn. And the withdrawal of more than a million Englishmen from civil life has unavoidably left vacancies which duly qualified women must be found and trained to fill. The Report of the Board of Trade on the state of employment in the United Kingdom for December, 1914, mentions an increase of 25 per cent. in the employment of women in London banks since the war, and the existence of a similar state of things in some other city employments. In the Post Office also women are working in what were formerly men's departments; they are also entering the grocery trade as shop assistants, acting as lift attendants, finding increased employment in metal work, e.g., in Vickers-Maxim's shops, and undertaking artistic work hitherto done by men in the printing trade.

The making of toys and dolls, in substitution for those formerly obtained from Germany, was started last autumn in various quarters. The Women's Emergency Corps and some branches of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, in particular, have managed to employ a number of women in this way, utilizing the taste and artistic skill that they possess. A large factory on ordinary business lines is now being started at Burton on Trent, and one (The Goblin Toy Factory) has already been started in Reading. It will ultimately employ 1,000 women, many of them skilled workers with artistic training, the majority ordinary factory hands. Handloom weaving has been suggested as an occupation in which women might find commercially remunerative work in the production of articles of special quality, for which a demand has revived. The artistic handicrafts generally, it has been suggested, might be revived with the same purpose.

No experiment in this direction ought to be discouraged. In particular, we should be on the look out for any opportunity for the development of talent or the exercise of taste among women thrown out of work in their own mechanical or monotonous trades. There is now an opportunity to enlarge the field of women's activities, and

to fit them to take in future a share in a larger variety of paid occupations, and also, it may be hoped, a fair chance to win and keep a place amongst the better remunerated workers. But we must bear in mind that it is not enough to obtain orders from friends and sympathizers. It is of no use, *as provision for unemployed wage-earners in distress*, to suggest occupations (such as poultry farming, or indeed any other farming, or running a tea-room or keeping a shop) which may, at best, *afford a livelihood as employers* to individual women able to command considerable capital. For the purpose of doing something for the unemployed women wage-earners the question must be honestly faced of whether in the proposed new trade there is (i) a continuing demand, (ii) from entirely uninterested purchasers, (iii) at a price sufficient to cover all the expenses of production, and (iv) of a volume sufficient to find lasting employment at all seasons of the year for a substantial number of women wage-earners, or regularly at certain seasons as an alternative trade. Unless these four questions can be answered in the affirmative, the proposed "new trade" is a sham, a philanthropic fad, really only another form of charitable relief, or at best a temporary makeshift.

### **What can be Given to the Unemployed—Doles or Training?**

A certain amount of unemployment among women wage-earners can be met by the development of new trades for women, but we cannot hope instantaneously at a time of crisis to provide in this way for the great mass of girls and women—to be numbered literally by the hundred thousand—now thrown out of employment by any severe depression of trade. There they are, in every large town in greater or smaller numbers, myriads of seamstresses and dressmakers of every grade, of tailoresses and milliners, and all the miscellaneous workers on articles of dress; factory operatives of all grades from the "box" and "jam" and confectionery "hands," the packers and labellers and bottlers of every conceivable commodity; the workers in jute, and wool, and silk and worsted, right up to the "four-loomers" in the cotton weaving shed; the charwomen and office cleaners; the typists, the book-keepers and the clerks; the nursery governesses and the "companions," all find their chances of employment contracting through no fault of their own. What are we to do for them?

There are two answers. The first is the voice of despair—Give them alms.

### **The Evil Policy of Doles.**

This is the easiest of all devices, the eagerly adopted remedy of the charitable, the "cheapest" way of getting the unemployed off the momentarily stirred consciences of the well-to-do. But, as everyone knows who has tried it, the distribution of money amongst those in distress—though we have perforce to resort to it in hard times if we are too stupid or too lazy or too unconscientious to find anything better—is the worst of all methods of relief, demoralising alike to giver and recipient. Hardly any character is strong enough to stand



up against the subtle corruption of dependence on alms. The dole is practically never adequate for maintenance; it is never to be relied upon, and consequently never admits of provident housekeeping; yet the mere expectation of it deadens all exertion, initiative and enterprise in seeking new employment. The unaccustomed idleness, with its evil loitering and inevitable gossiping, is especially demoralising to women used to regular employment. Finally, there is the tragic dilemma of the "scale." If the weekly dole is large enough for really adequate maintenance in full health and vigor, it will be (as the nation has with shame to confess) considerably in excess of the earnings of women at work in half the women's trades; and it is not in human nature to resist the temptation of letting slip the chances of employment that involve an actual loss of income. If, on the other hand, the dole is made less than women actually earn at their work, it means slow starvation.

### **The Policy of Training.**

The more sensible practical alternative to employment that is commercially productive is not doles but another kind of employment—employment of an educational character. Those women and girls whom we find it impossible to place in situations in the ordinary way, whom we cannot, even temporarily, take into our augmented municipal employment, and for whom we fail to discover new trades, we can at any rate set to work at their own improvement. The provision of "maintenance under training" for girls and women is a plain matter of justice. Far less has hitherto been done for the technical training of girls than for the training of boys. There are far fewer scholarships (of all sorts, at all ages) available for girls than for boys. And in the war emergency of 1914, the Government, for its own purposes, applied to the million and a quarter unemployed men the principle of "maintenance under training" on a gigantic scale, taking them into army pay, and providing them with clothing and boots and complete maintenance, whilst it trained and drilled them into the utmost physical and military efficiency. Nothing analogous to this was done for the three or four hundred thousand women thrown out of work, though they were just as much in need of physical and sometimes of professional training as the men, and the nation, also because of the war, was in urgent need of trained workers.

### **What Kind of Training.**

When it is sceptically asked what kind of training could be given to unemployed wage-earners, and whether the women are not too old to learn, we become conscious of the amount of prejudice that lies behind the doubt whether it is of any consequence whether women are properly trained or not! As a matter of fact the problem of providing training for unemployed women offers fewer difficulties than the corresponding problem with regard to men.

In the autumn of 1914 the Central Committee on Women's Employment, formed by the Queen to devise schemes (Miss Mary



Macarthur, Hon. Secretary), worked out plans in some detail for exactly this work,\* to which the seal of Cabinet approval was given. It was laid down, as a fundamental condition, that the work to be done "should not compete in any way with ordinary industry," and that "it should be of such a nature as to maintain or improve the efficiency of the unemployed women." What was aimed at was "education or technical training or instruction." This might, where possible, take the form of instruction in the processes of new trades. It might, on the other hand (and this was found more generally practicable), take the form of instruction in the making and renovation of clothing of all kinds, from cutting out to finishing. It was found that hardly any of the unemployed wage-earning women were competent at domestic dressmaking and needlework, even for their own requirements; and of course hardly any of them proved to be able to dispense with instruction as to reshaping and renovating their own garments and hats. Every kind of mending and adapting furnished many useful lessons.

Simple domestic economy was also taught with great success. Practical cookery, home laundry work and even the elements of domestic hygiene and infant management could be made subjects of instruction. All this naturally requires organizing, and involves the engagement of competent, skilled instructresses in the different subjects—thus finding suitable employment for such persons who are themselves out of work—and these engagements have, of course, to be at comparatively high rates of pay. The Government rightly insisted, through the Central Committee on Women's Employment, that no attempt must ever be made to beat down the standard rates, whether of forewomen or instructresses, cooks or charwomen.

But the training given was by no means all of domestic utility. Workers already belonging to a skilled trade, or anxious to train for a skilled trade, were grouped for a special course of trade instruction provided by the local education authority, after consultation with the women's department of the Labor Exchange as to local demand for skilled workers.† About 150 girl clerks were sent to educational institutions to learn foreign languages; 30 ex-factory girls, by their own desire, were sent to train in market gardening [an experiment reported in January, 1915, as very successful]; some elder women were trained as sick-room helps for laid-up mothers of families. In January, 1915, the committee were giving grants to 55 work and training rooms (about 4,158 workers), carried on by local representative committees, and had 27 more under consideration, whilst their own experimental schemes were occupying and training 1,000 women, besides the 2,000 employed through their contracts branch or by the Central Unemployed Body for London.

\* Memoranda on Schemes of Work for Women Temporarily Unemployed Owing to the War, issued by the Central Committee on Women's Employment, 8 Grosvenor Place, London, S.W. (W.E.R., 2, 3 and 4).

† The London Juvenile Advisory Committee is issuing a pamphlet showing which are the trades which, owing to the war, are needing an increased number of learners. (Board of Trade, Labor Exchanges and Unemployment Department, Queen Anne's Chambers, S.W.)

The experience of the autumn of 1914 by no means exhausts the possibilities of providing training for unemployed women. The problem need not always be dealt with on wholesale lines. When time permits, the cases should be considered one by one, and each girl or woman provided with the individual training best suited to her needs. In a large city the number of women thrown out of work in the different branches of the dressmaking and tailoring trades would allow of the selection of those suitable in age and otherwise to be sent to technical classes that would qualify them for the more skilled and more highly paid branches of their trades, from which they would otherwise remain all their lives excluded. Even three months expert technical training will often start a young woman in the progress from a mere "hand" at 8s. or 10s. a week into a machinist or a waistcoat-maker, who will presently be making twice or thrice that wage. In the crafts at which women already find employment, such as upholstery and bookbinding, most of them never get a chance of rising to the more skilled grades, at which some women earn relatively good wages. Even a few months instruction would put some of these excluded ones on an upward move. There are thousands of women who gain a living by cooking or laundry work, but there is constant scarcity of really trained cooks and an unsatisfied demand for the higher grades of laundry workers. Some of the unemployed women should be picked out for thoroughly expert technical instruction in these relatively well-paid occupations. Indeed, there seems no reason why selected women should not be put through the necessary training for dairy and other agricultural work,\* for sick nursing, for dispensing, for midwifery, for the work of health officer and sanitary inspector, even for the understaffed medical profession, where there is such urgent permanent need for women's services, while so many suitable girls, who have had a good secondary education, cannot afford the needful five years of training. Once the idea is grasped that the best way to spend the time of unemployment is in training, and that the best form of provision for the unemployed for whom we cannot find situations is maintenance while they are being taught, there are endless opportunities of instruction and improvement to be discovered.

Experience, alas! shows that it is very difficult to get this principle of "educational training and maintenance" into the heads of town and county councillors and members of local relief committees, male or female. In the autumn of 1914 the Central Committee on Women's Employment seems to have found it expedient to compromise with those members of the Cabinet and those mayoresses and other "committee ladies" who did not "hold with" education, and were always hankering after some way of "getting the women to work"! In order to satisfy this yearning for "production," it was found expedient to allow part of the time to be devoted to "making things in which it was difficult to pretend that the workers were in any way benefiting, either by acquiring new skill or by otherwise

\* The Board of Agriculture is actively organizing classes for women and girls in butter-making and other branches of dairy and other work connected with agriculture.

improving themselves." It was then necessary, if this misguided waste of time had to occur, to see to it that the work of the women, at any rate, did no harm in putting other women out of work. It was therefore sternly insisted on that under no circumstances were supplies to be sent to the soldiers or sailors for the diminution of the War Office or Admiralty orders, and that the produce was never to be sold in any way. What was produced had to be given away to the very poorest, who could not possibly have otherwise been purchasers. In this way a number of women were kept at work making maternity outfits and articles of clothing for gratuitous distribution. As the women learned nothing by this work, and were thus in no way aided to obtain better employment than heretofore, whilst the commercial value of what they produced was inconsiderable and, of course, enormously below what was paid to them in maintenance, this plan of making things for the poor is not to be recommended. It ought only to be a concession to the ignorance or prejudices of the committee when the members cannot be made to see reason.

### Payment or Maintenance.

It is obvious that what the women receive who are thus given training or instruction, or who are put to work, not at their own trades, in producing maternity outfits or garments for gratuitous distribution, is not in the nature of wages, and much misunderstanding is caused when that term is used for it. What ought to be provided for those unemployed for whom we fail to find productive work is not wages, but *maintenance until situations at wages can be discovered for them*. We want to get them back to regular wage-earning—if possible in a higher grade of work than that which they left—at the earliest possible moment.

What can properly be paid as maintenance? The Central Committee on Women's Employment decided, after careful consideration, that the amount could not safely be put at more than 10s. a week as a maximum for women over eighteen, and for this sum five days attendance (or forty hours) at the educational institution or women's training centre (or women's workroom, as it was sometimes less aptly termed) should be required. Where tramway fares or other travelling expenses have to be incurred, the amount of these might be added. It is desirable that dinners and teas should be supplied on the premises, where convenient, at a very small charge, the women taking it in turns to be taught the very best way of preparing these meals. The maintenance allowance of 10s. per week is, of course, for the woman alone. Whenever she has children, or other dependants, a separate allowance for their maintenance, according to the approved scale, is supposed to be made by the local relief committee. For girls between sixteen and eighteen thrown out of work, and in attendance at the training centre, an allowance of 1s. a day was suggested.

These amounts are far lower than could be wished, and they were much complained of by hasty critics. But there can be no doubt that the decision of the Central Committee on Women's Employment was right; and it is to be noted that it received the unanimous



endorsement, after careful consideration, of the War Emergency Workers' National Committee, representing the Labor Party, the Trades Union Congress, and the principal women's trade unions. It is absolutely essential, if maintenance is to be offered to the 5 or 10 per cent. who are unemployed, that this should not actually be more than what is being earned as wages by the 90 or 95 per cent. who are still at work. If a person, merely by becoming unemployed, could get more money than by continuing at work, experience shows that there is real danger of the provision that we are striving to make for the involuntarily unemployed being swamped by a rush of workers throwing up their jobs to get the larger income. Ten shillings a week is little enough. But, unfortunately, there are many hundreds of thousands of women whose wages are less than this sum. Indeed, it was found necessary to add that where a woman habitually earned less than 10s. a week at her work, she must be restricted to fewer than five days a week attendance, so as to prevent it being so attractive to her that she would be in no hurry to get again into employment. It is, of course, of the utmost importance to raise the deplorably low rates of wages common in women's employment; but it is of no use trying to do so by giving more to unemployed women for maintenance than they can earn as wages when they are at work. What we have to secure is an extension of the Trade Boards Act to all trades in which less than (say) 30s. a week is paid to man or woman, and such a raising of the legal minimum wages fixed under that Act as will secure a much higher standard of life than the humbler grades of workers are now permitted to enjoy.

### **The Dependants of Women Workers.**

One main cause why public opinion is so careless of the sufferings of wage-earning women is that few persons realize the extent to which the female members of the family amongst the working classes contribute to the family income. It is quite untrue, as is commonly supposed by men of all ranks and by most women of the middle and upper classes, that women workers differ from men workers in having no one to support by their exertions but themselves. Although everyone knows cases of daughters in domestic service who are sending money home regularly, or of factory girls, living at home, who are paying part or all of their wages to their parents, or of married women going out to work, or taking work at home, to help to supply the needs of the family, few persons deduce anything from these facts. Few realize that when large numbers of women workers are unemployed it means a great increase of poverty in working-class homes throughout the country, as well as the distress of the unemployed women themselves.

A careful statistical enquiry of the Fabian Women's Group, extending over thousands of cases, in practically the whole range of women's occupations, showed that *about half* the women wage-earners canvassed were supporting, wholly or partially, either children or parents, or brothers and sisters, or disabled husbands or other dependent relatives. Among laundresses, over 75 per cent. were so



contributing; among cotton weavers, 66 per cent.; among needle-women, 60 per cent.; among domestic servants, 53 per cent.; and among nurses, 52 per cent.

Among women who have received a university education the returns showed 43 per cent. as helping to support others; and in a similar investigation undertaken among themselves by the women employees in the Post Office, 42 per cent. of the women of over ten years service were returned as contributing to the support of others.

From enquiries in a very poor neighborhood in Outer London among some 750 workers, the majority of whom were girls of about 16-18 years of age, with an average wage of 7s. a week, 84 per cent. were shown to be entirely supporting themselves, and nearly 62 per cent. contributing to the family income over and above their own cost of living.

In Northampton and Warrington particulars have been obtained from cards kindly lent by Dr. Bowley, which contained the results of an investigation made by him into some 1,300 working class households, in which are over 600 female workers, 30 per cent. of whom may be said to be contributing to the upkeep of the family. In both these towns the family wage is fairly high.

From information supplied by the Women's Industrial Council, it was found that out of 578 married women working in gainful occupations, only 53 were not self-supporting, that 97 (or 16.78 per cent.) were the sole support of the family, and that at least 64 per cent. were contributing to the support of their children. In an article on "Working Class Households in Reading," Dr. Bowley says that in 609 households canvassed, "The statistician's normal family of man (at work), wife (not working), and three dependent children only occurs thirty-three times" (*Royal Statistical Society's Journal*, June, 1913).

The fact that, as is indicated by the above examples and figures, a large proportion of the seven million women workers must provide for dependants, is of the greatest importance. *It means that probably at least three millions of gainfully occupied women are responsible for the maintenance, wholly or in part, of others besides themselves.* This is one more reason, and a crucial reason, why serious attention should be given by the Government and by the public to the conditions of women's employment and the needs of unemployed women.

## PART II.—WOMEN AND THE CONTROL OF INDUSTRY AND SUPPLY.

There are many causes, besides the carelessness of the public, why women's unemployment and the resultant distress commands so little attention. Everywhere the economic position of women is changing with the times, and not only do men fail to grasp the fact and its implications, but women do not understand their own present position themselves.

In England—the European country where agrarian and industrial life has most completely changed during the last hundred and fifty years—the anomalies and contradictions of women's economic position lie thickest. Hence the war crisis caught British women at a peculiar disadvantage. They had in readiness no trained and organized expeditionary force to join issue at once in the economic battle. They were quite unprepared to step into the breach caused in the normal economic life of the nation by the diversion of the energies of increasing numbers of men from the creation of wealth to its destructive expenditure. For nowadays Englishwomen, with very few exceptions, normally take no effective part in directing the business life of the country.

### How British Women are at a Disadvantage.

In France, in Germany, in Austria, in Galicia, where a large proportion of the population is engaged in agriculture, and where small peasant holdings still abound, women, deprived of their menfolk, have been able to carry on the work of producing food for their people at large as well as for their own families. It is an occupation in which, mind and body, they have been accustomed to take active part. The business of the small holding is as much theirs as their husbands', and many of them also do seasonal field work for wages, e.g., in the beet fields. Therefore, when the withdrawal of the men left them woefully short-handed, these women were able *to direct their own labor* and to meet the economic strain by gallant exertions. In August the French Government appealed to the women of France to keep agriculture going and to feed the army, and splendidly they have done it. Never have corn harvest and vintage been more successfully gathered in the undevastated districts.

No such simple course of action has been open to the women of England. We have now few small holdings. Women have gradually been dropping out of all share in farm management, even in their ancient kingdom, the dairy, and in the south scarcely any women are now even seasonally employed in agricultural work. Our great-great-grandmothers would have had little difficulty in exerting themselves to supply the serious shortage of labor dreaded by our farmers; but, as things are, the help south-country women could give would be wholly unskilled, and farmers are demanding that little boys, who at least have some idea of farm work, shall be taken from school to do it.

Agriculture is no longer our main industry or source of supply, but Englishwomen are also at a tremendous disadvantage with regard to all the great industrial and commercial undertakings upon which our national maintenance depends. They have next to no part or lot in the organization, direction, and control of these enterprises, though by millions they are employed in them. In France women normally take an active share in the management of a family business, and therefore when the invasion of 1914 called fathers, sons, and husbands to the colors, many mothers, daughters, and wives could and did carry on the concern, thus materially help-

ing to minimise the stagnation and dislocation resulting from the war. But amongst our seven million women in gainful occupations very few indeed have the business knowledge and experience to carry on successfully even the smaller trades. Except those in domestic service—the most unorganized and chaotic of industries—most of our female workers for gain are simply units in the vast army serving male employers; and, with few exceptions, they are as helplessly ignorant of the business management and finance of the enterprise they serve as of the larger economic conditions determining their employment.\* What part, for instance, do women take in the business management and direction of the cotton industry, in which the majority of skilled operatives are women? Englishwomen are as eager to help their country as are Frenchwomen, but they have lost touch with the guidance of its economic life; consequently an appeal from the English Government to any female section of our industrial population, such as that addressed by the French Government to the women agriculturists of France, would be sheer farce. Our seven millions of gainfully occupied women have little or no control over the arrangements conditioning their occupations. Amongst the too few women trade unionists and the handful of women serving on Trade Boards business aptitude is very slowly developing, but amongst women born in the employing classes—except, perhaps, amongst small shopkeepers—the tendency has been to ignore business, even a business carried on by the men of the family, and girls who have entered of conscious purpose upon a breadwinning occupation have usually launched forth in some other direction.

### Family and National Housekeeping.

If this be the case with regard to the seven million gainfully occupied, it is equally applicable to the millions of unpaid British women occupied in organizing consumption in detail, each in her separate household. At least half of these have no grasp, often scarcely the vaguest conception, of national housekeeping or the relation of their own unit with national supply. Our wholesale distribution, like our great industries, is organized and directed by men; women have been content to remain in ignorance of its larger aspects, to say nothing of controlling them. Consequently, like their gainfully occupied sisters, millions of "home makers" have no knowledge enabling them intelligently to help their country at an economic crisis, or to deal with the economic distresses of the workers of their own sex, who supply or serve them. Here, however, the light is beginning to dawn—and again, as amongst the wage-earners, the solution is coming from the toilers themselves.

Some three million married working women belong to the co-operative movement, probably about half being actual shareholders, while the remainder are wives of shareholders. In industrial co-oper-

\* See figures of women working employers for England and Wales, p. 3. Both mistresses and servants are now beginning to make some attempts to organize domestic work in accordance with modern economic conditions.



ative societies distribution is controlled by the people for the people. In some towns it is already customary for women to attend the quarterly business meetings of the societies, and thus take their share in the control of these societies, which do a trade of nearly £80,000,000 annually. There is a slowly growing movement for placing women on the management committees of societies, and there are now eighty-nine women on fifty-six of these committees, including some of the largest, such as Leeds, with nearly 50,000 members, Manchester, Bristol, etc.

The distributive societies have combined to form the English and Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Societies, doing a trade of £28,000,000 annually. Women are beginning to be sent by their societies as delegates to the business meetings of these societies and thus gain a knowledge of wholesale trading.

The war has proved conclusively the value of the co-operative societies to the consumers. In the panic at the outset they refused in most cases to raise prices, meeting the demand by supplying only the weekly amounts their members were accustomed to purchase. By this action the general rise of prices in capitalistic shops was checked to a considerable extent.

The Co-operative Wholesale Society was able to give valuable information to the Government as to stocks and prices by which they were able to check the statements of capitalistic traders.

In co-operative societies goods are sold at the ordinary market prices, and the surplus, which in capitalistic trade goes as profit to the shareholders, is divided amongst the purchasers in proportion to their purchases, after paying a fixed interest on capital.

By joining a co-operative society and attending its business meetings every woman can obtain a knowledge of distributive and wholesale trading and can share in its control. To enable themselves to do this more intelligently, London members of the Women's Co-operative Guild are attending classes on distribution and supply.

At the universities also, some few girls are seriously studying the economics of supply and its control in relation to consumption. Still the fact remains that British women have much ground to traverse before they can take their proper place as effective members of the greatest industrial community in the world.

### **Women and the Control of Capital.**

Another aspect of the economic position of Englishwomen is the curious anomaly that, in spite of their lack of control over industry, supply and the conditions of employment, a large amount of wealth is now entirely at their personal disposal. A British woman, married or single, be she the mistress of hundreds of thousands of pounds, a small shareholder in a co-operative society, or a post office depositor, a physician in large practice, or a charwoman at half-a-crown a day, has now a complete legal control over her possessions and earnings. Like a man, she is free to spend her income and manage her own affairs as she pleases. She need not consult her husband or anyone else; and of course she has the legal and moral responsibilities of an

economically independent person. The war subscription lists are a current illustration of the large amount of money thus at the disposal of women.

This money owned by women is part of the capital financing British industry and commerce. Yet the economically independent women of to-day seem to have less practical control over the work supplying national necessities than had, for instance, the working mistress of an English farm in the eighteenth century; though in those days a married woman had no legal right to keep or spend even her own earnings without her husband's consent. Since the decline of agriculture and of the system of domestic industry, and the advent of production and distribution on the grand scale in this country, our women seem to have dropped the slender guiding rein they once held in matters economic. Indeed in the textile industries, when the female "hands" followed their work from home to factory, the female directing brain was already atrophied. Whilst women have continued to crowd into paid employment, they have failed to obtain any grip of the new forces directing our complex business life, despite the great increase of their personal economic freedom and the opening out of ever widening opportunities of education and of work.

### **Why Women Have Stood Outside Modern Business Life.**

It is not a natural lack of aptitude for business in the female brain: witness the organizing and administrative ability manifested by many women at the head of institutions, schools, societies, and large households, and the capacity and initiative shown in the present crisis by so many who in suffrage and other women's societies, or as trade union or co-operative guild organizers, have gained experience in conducting business on their own responsibility. Neither is it lack of intellectual grasp: witness the brilliant achievement of women who take economics as a university subject. Yet many a man has initiated, organized, and directed a flourishing business concern with far less opportunity than many women get, or might get if the normal, average, modern Englishwoman, especially in the employing classes, had not developed the habit of holding herself aloof from business and even the management of her own affairs.

This attitude in the women of the employing, and now of many of the employed, classes seems to have arisen as the direct result of the great Industrial Revolution, which so completely altered our economic life. One of its results was the supremacy of money, so that, instead of the old system of production for use and exchange in kind, supplies were bought and products were sold to an ever increasing extent, and personal wealth was capitalized for machinery and wages. This capitalization of wealth, in the then state of the law with regard to married women's property, meant that the control of capitalist production fell entirely to men. Sir Frederic Eden, in his monumental work on the "State of the Poor," in 1797, opines that married women had grown slack in working to provide their share of the family income because of the injustice of the law which deprived them of the disposal of their own earnings. Whether he

was right or not about the poor, there was probably a great deal of truth in his suggestion as applied to the wives of the growing classes of large farmers and manufacturers. The great industries separated not only work, but the control and direction of work, from home activities. Husband and wife no longer consulted over the details of daily occupations in pursuit of common interests centring round the homestead, and, moreover, the growing wealth of the middle classes made it less and less necessary for the whole family to work.

Superabundance of wealth fostered the idea that it is "genteel" and "womanly" for the women of a family to live in more or less idle and ignorant dependence on the income and exertions of its men, an idea as foreign to the English farmers, craftsmen, and small traders of the eighteenth century as to the laboring folk. Gradually it spread from the upper to the middle classes, and thence downward. To women it was enervatingly easy, and men encouraged and approved it, partly from kindness, partly because it flattered their vanity, partly from an inclination to dominate, and a delusion of self-interest.

Ever since the modern awakening of womanhood began, the feminine outlook on the economic side has been confused by two opposite currents of social feeling and opinion: the downward current toward gentility, which regards paid work for women as a miserable necessity for the poor and the unfortunate, and even now has by no means wholly spent its force; and the upward current toward conscious recognition of the right and duty of all women, as of all men, to work and to be fairly remunerated. This second current is still mainly individualist in tone, and still splits on the obstacle of marriage, and its course is as yet by no means clearly defined; but the shock of the war, with its revelation of their lack of control over the economic forces that sway national life, has been a rude awakening for intelligent Englishwomen. They feel that their present economic position is an anachronism, and are bitterly conscious of failure and shortcoming; perhaps never so bitterly as when men are praising their zeal in knitting "comforts," whilst they are becoming more and more aware that thereby they have been taking bread out of their unemployed sisters' mouths. Suppose for a moment that the share of control once possessed by women in the textile industries—a share so real that for centuries statutes dealing with the cloth trade explicitly included clothiers of both sexes—had developed with the industry, instead of perishing utterly a century or more before the Industrial Revolution. Our Government might in that case have been able to make, in the present emergency, just such an appeal to Englishwomen as the French Government made to the women of France. It might have appealed to our women clothiers to carry on one of the industries most essential to the well-being alike of the troops and of the civil population, whilst the men who usually shared in the work went forth to fight. And our women cloth manufacturers might then have organized the absorption into the growing needs of the trade of every unemployed woman capable of the work required.



### After the War.

Alas for the might-have-been! But the future is our own, and already it bristles with challenge. When the war is over the question of women's employment and unemployment will become more difficult and more acute than now. Not only will there be many young widows, but a considerably larger proportion of the girls of the rising generation than of the young women of to-day will be, not only fatherless and brotherless, but husbandless and childless. Are girls of the upper and middle class to continue to grow up work-shy and unskilled? Is employment to be open to them and to the daughters of the manual workers only in certain limited directions? Is it to be confined to the lower grades of trade and industry? Are the wages of women always to remain inadequate to their needs? Or will the women of Britain rise to the occasion and insist on a thorough technical training for girls of all classes? Will they declare that a little instruction in baby-craft, and housecraft, and needlework at elementary and secondary schools will not meet the case of women who must earn a livelihood? "Vocational training" of this sort will not fit our ablest girls to win their way to a place in the direction of national industry, or to influence its future developments. Yet, that they should do so is, above all else, the need of to-day, and will be still more the need of to-morrow. Women must make up their minds to meet it. Business men must be persuaded to train a daughter as they would a son to help and to succeed them. Girls must be taught to manage their own affairs, and expected to do so. Mothers must grasp the fact that henceforth women are called to take active part in the business life of the country, not merely to work for a living if they cannot catch a husband, and that they must be trained accordingly.

To meet the future on the economic side it will not suffice for women to obtain Parliamentary Enfranchisement and adequate representation on Local Governing Bodies. It will not suffice for them to obtain free admission to the middle and upper grades of the Civil Service and of Municipal Employment; it will not suffice that large opportunities of a professional career in the Medical and Health Services, and other honorable and profitable callings, are opening before girls able to take advantage of them. None of these important things will suffice to put the economic position of our womanhood upon a sound basis, unless women in general alter their whole attitude towards business, and conceive it to be their bounden duty, and an act of social service, not merely to study economics, but to set and accustom themselves to take an active share in the practical administration of business and industrial enterprise. There are indications that this drastic change is already beginning to take place—a splendid enthusiasm, a tentative activity in many directions is stirring amongst women. When it takes definite and permanent shape, and not until then, will the problems of women's employment and unemployment be adequately dealt with.

### Summary.

We have seen that the unemployment among women wage-earners demands consideration independently from that among men; and that it ought to be prevented, as far as practicable, by the same increase of public employment to balance the decrease of private employment. Local authorities ought to take all possible steps to increase the number of the women and girls for whom they provide either wages or scholarships. The opportunities for immediately increasing the volume of public employment are less easy to find in the case of women than in the case of men. Other provision for unemployed women has accordingly to be made. We should strive to set going new trades for women. Apart from this difficult task, we must provide, for the women still unemployed, *not productive work of commercial character* which would result only in throwing other women out of work, but *maintenance under training*. All sorts of training might well be provided, and the experience of the Central Committee on Women's Employment in the autumn of 1914 affords valuable guidance. The fullest standard rates of wages should be paid to all persons employed (forewomen, instructresses, clerks, typists, charwomen, etc.). What is provided for the unemployed women themselves is not wages but maintenance. This cannot safely be put at more than the women habitually earn, and the sum of 10s. per week, for five days attendance, is found to be as much as can be given without risk of the whole experiment being swamped. Separate provision must, however, be made for travelling expenses and for the maintenance of dependants. Women workers have others dependent upon their exertions to an extent at present unrecognized, and their unemployment is a widespread source of destitution.

Women's employment, its conditions, its remuneration, its vicissitudes, should be the vital concern of women; not only when their own livelihood is involved, not merely as a matter of philanthropic interest, but because it is essential to the well-being of the womanhood of the country, and therefore of the whole people, that women should take an intelligently active share in the economic life of the nation. Though so large a proportion of British women work to produce our wealth, though so many are occupied in organizing its consumption in detail, and so many own a considerable share of it, women have failed to take their proper part in skilled labor and in the responsible direction of industry and supply. The economic crisis of 1914 has revealed this failure. For women, as for men, the war has brought a call to be up and doing.

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